BILL of the U.S.A.

Kenneth Graham Duffield

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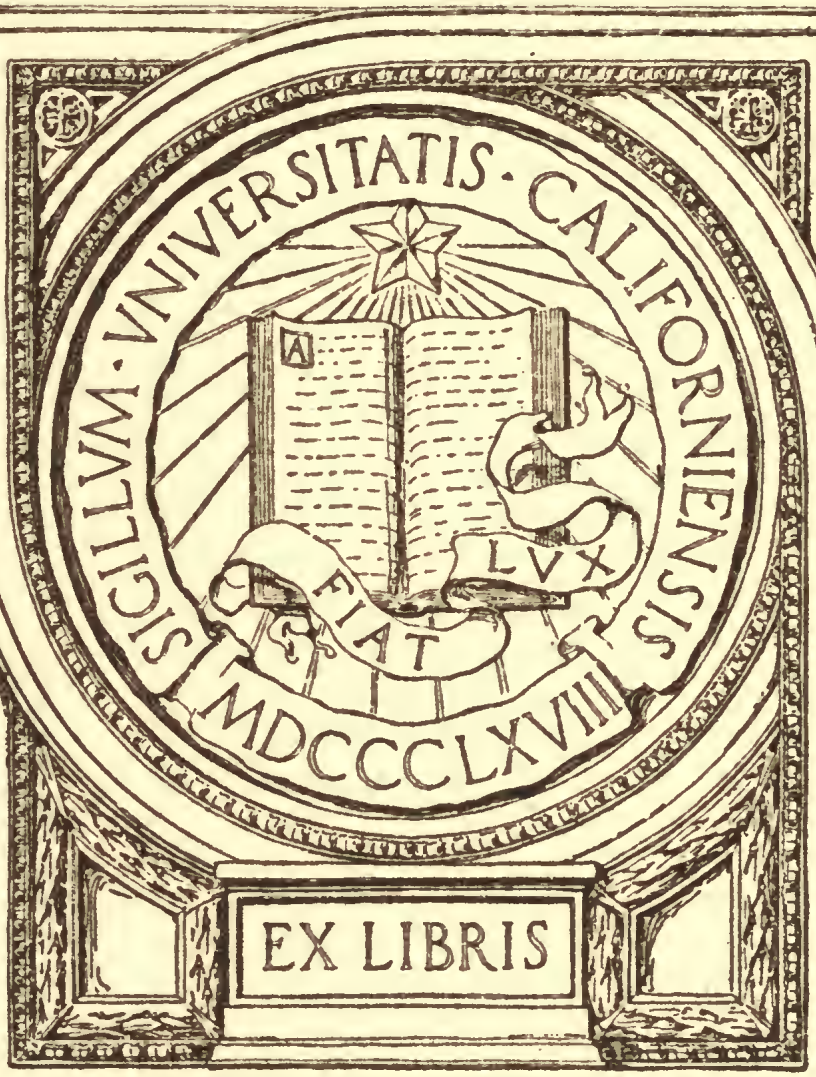
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Bill

OF THE U. S. A.

And Other War Verses

By

Kenneth Graham Duffield

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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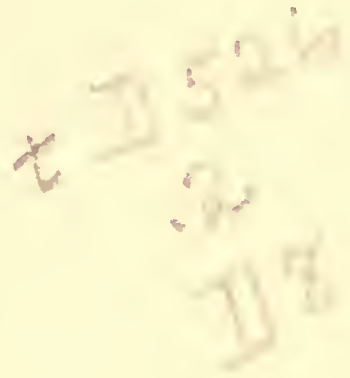

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FOREWORD

Somebody's boy has crossed th' sea,
T' do th' fightin' fer you and me.
Let's call him "Bill"—he's any man's
son
That carries a pack an' shoulders a
gun.

LIBRARY OF CALIFORNIA

Bill of the U. S. A.

BILL

There wan't much excitement 'round
our way,
'Bout th' war.
We tuk th' papers an' read 'em
through,
When we hadn' nuthin' better t' do.
We didn' know which side wuz right,
An' didn' much care who won th'
fight.
So th' ole war run along until
Th' President said he needed Bill.

Seems like th' Dutch wuz a-killin' our
folks
Out on th' sea,
A-sinkin' our ships an' a-sendin' 'em
down,
An' lettin' th' wimmin an' children
drown.
Th' President writ 'em a note er two,
A-tellin' 'em what they'd better do,
But they kep' right on until
Th' President says, "It's up t' Bill."

So he sent out word t' count th' men
Ez wuz fitten t' fight,
An' Bill he put right off fer town,
An' found a feller 'at writ it down
'Bout where he wuz born—what town
an' state.
An' Bill he give 'im his age an' date:
"Born up yonder an' livin' there still.
Scratch out 'Exempt,' I'll fight," sez
Bill.

There wan't any fellers much straighter than Bill—
Er better built.
A hundred an' eighty an' five foot ten—
Th' mould God uses when makin' men.
Bill's hair wuz black an' his eyes were blue—
That wuz his Irish showin' through.
An' th' captain sez, ez captains will,
"Send me a million men like Bill."

So Bill he's packed an' ready t' go,
'Way over there.
A-shoulderin' gun an' his soldier's kit—
Able an' willin' t' do his "bit."
Ready t' see th' ole war through,
An' do th' fightin' there is t' do.
They've fought together, an' allus will—
God an' th' U. S. A.—an' Bill.

BILL'S DAD

Our last sight uv Bill wuz jest 'is back,
Far off in th' distance, beneath 'is pack.
Couldn' go t' th' train, his mother an' me,
A-makin' it harder fer Bill, y' see.
We stood on the sidewalk, an' watched 'em go—
Shoulder t' shoulder, an' row on row.
Bill couldn' speak, but 'is head wuz high.
He gave us a look, an' waved "Good-bye,"
An' I couldn' help feelin', ez fathers will,
"Ef it only wuz me—instead uv Bill!"

We didn' say much, at supper, that night,
An' mother seemed older — more feeble an' white,
She stuck it out somehow, ez brave ez could be;
Never thought uv herself, but allus uv me.

* * * *

We seen in th' papers 'at Bill'd reached France,
An' off t' th' front, at th' very first chance,
It told how th' Frenchmen thanked God, on their knees,
When the Star Spangled Banner flew out on th' breeze,
Still I couldn' help feelin' ez fathers will,
"Ef it only wuz me—instead uv Bill!"

An' so it ran on, with a word, now an' then,
That told us uv Bill an' th' rest uv th' men.
An' often at night, when th' supper wuz through,
We'd read in th' Bible a chapter er two.
Th' thing 'at hurt most, though, wuz Bill's empty chair,
Drawn up t' th' table ez if he wuz there.
We know he'll be back, when th' world is set free,
An' we'll be together—Bill, mother an' me.
But I allus keep prayin', ez fathers will,
"Ferget about us God—an' look after Bill."

THE MOTHER OF BILL

We found it wuz hard t' let Bill go
Off t' th' war.
It's easy t' cheer th' other man's son—
It comes kinda hard when there's only one.
But Bill, he sez, "There's a job t' do;
I'll shoulder a gun an' see it through."
An' over in France, they foller 'im still,
Th' love an' th' prayers uv th' Mother uv Bill.

Th' day it wuz cruel, an' th' night wuz worse,
A-waitin' fer Bill.
But th' Doctor an' me, we seen it through,
Him tellin' me what there wuz t' do.
An' after a while it come t' me—
We used t' be two, but now wuz three;
An' a little pink face, when all wuz still,
Wuz snuggled up close t' th' Mother uv Bill.

Th' strongest thing in all Mother's life
Wuz her love fer Bill.
She'd plan an' plan what he'd be some day;
"Ain't nothin' too big fer Bill," she'd say.
I know 'at th' angel, in robes uv white,
'At gathers th' prayers we say at night,
Takes t' God, first, an' allus will,
Th' whispered prayers uv the Mother uv Bill.

BACKING UP BILL

There wan't many fellers went over
th' sea,
Along with Bill.
Th' "Dutch," they laughed, ez they
seen 'em come,
With blare uv bugle an' tap uv drum,
They kinda fergot, though th' men
wuz few—
They carried th' ole Red, White and
Blue,
An' where it waves there's follerin'
still,
Ten million men t' back up Bill.

Th' President said, ez they sailed away,
"Hold 'em, Bill!"
Git out in front, where th' fightin's hot;
Show 'em th' kind uv men we got.
Th' food is coming, an' ships an' guns—
You'll need 'em all t' beat th' Huns.
I haven't fergot—an' I never will—
Th' promise I made t' back up Bill."

A hole in th' ground an' a place t' sleep
Satisfies Bill.
He needs th' bread an' enough t' eat.
So use up th' corn—send HIM th' wheat.
It's fish an' fowl fer me an' you,
But good red meat fer th' fightin' crew.
Cut out th' waste till we're "over th' hill."
Everything counts while' we're backin Bill.

Some folks fight an' others pay,
A-helpin' Bill.
Some give a million an' some a cent;
It ain't what you give, but how it's meant.
So give an' give an' give agen,
Till th' country's clean uv money an' men.
Give ez you can, uv your own free will,
Stand by your country—an' back up Bill.

Folks we're helpin' are fixin' t' quit,
So th' papers say.
Bill's been t' school an' he's almost through;
Th' lesson's learned, an' there's work t' do.
He's in th' fight, an' he's in t' stay,
Till th' "Dutch" are marchin' t' other way.
They ain't won yet, an' they never will,
'Cause th' HULL DERNED COUNTRY'S backin' Bill.

UP TO BILL

There's ain't many fellers a-laughin' t'day
'Bout th' war.
A-sayin' they know it's boun' t' be through,
'Fore Bill an' th' rest learn what t' do.
Things don't run on ez smooth ez they did,
Mistakes are made an' have t' be hid.
An' I can't help thinkin' an' wond'rin' still
If the Allies don't figger—"It's up t' Bill."

Bill's big an' strong, an' he'll play th' game
'Way over th' sea.
He's heard th' stories th' blind men tell
Uv liquid fire, like a burnin' hell.
He swore an oath an' he breathed a prayer:
"God help th' 'Dutch,' if they don't play fair."
An' th' sightless eyes will remind him still
Th' payment is due—an' it's up t' Bill.

It's goin' t' be bitter an' hard an' cruel
Afore we're done.
An' the fightin' man, an' his fightin' crew,
Will have a-plenty uv work t' do.
Soldiers an' sailors an' those 'at fly
Have shed their blood an' had t' die.
They gave all they had, ez brave men will—
They fought a good fight—now it's up t' Bill.

Th' days will be long when there ain't no news
A-tellin' uv Bill.
We know 'at he'll stick, through thick an' thin.
We're backin' him up, an' he's bound t' win.
An' th' great big heart uv the U. S. A.,
A-growin' tend'rer day by day,
Is holdin' him close, an' ever will,
'Cause her whole existence is up t' Bill.

CHRISTMAS—AND BILL

It don't seem more'n a year er two,
Since Bill wuz small,
An' askin' questions 'bout Santa Claus,
An' whether reindeer had feet er paws.
But allus at Christmas, his Mother an' me,
We'd hang up th' stockin's fer Bill t' see.
They looked real friendly, ez stockin's do,
With a dear little stockin' between th' two.

But th' years run on, an' th' days
went by,
Ez they allus will.
An' Bill he growed up big an' strong,
With a heart ez clean ez a blue-bird's
song.
We had our sorrows, ez parents will,
But never a heartache cause uv Bill.
An' still each year, fer gifts unseen,
Th' stockin's hung with Bill's be-
tween.

Just beginnin' t' know Bill good,
When th' war broke out,
An' Bill jined up with th' fightin'
crew,
An' sez t' me, "Dad, there's work t'
do.
You stay at home, an' work an' pay,
I'll fight fer th' flag an' th' U. S. A."
He said he'd be back, when th' chores
wuz done
A-makin' "good Germans" of every
Hun.

It's sad an' lonely, at Christmas time,
Fer mother an' me.
Th' load is heavy th' parents bear,
With us over here an' him over there,
But Christmas Eve, when th' fire is dim,
He'll think uv us an' we'll think uv him,
An' God, some day, when th' war is done,
Will send us back our fightin' son.

A LETTER TO BILL

"It's lonely, son, since you went away,
Across th' sea,
Th' birds don't sing ez they used t' do,
When we went fishin'—just me an' you.
It's hard t' bear—you're all I've got,
An' when I gave you I gave a lot.
But stick t' your job, an' be a man,
If you can't lick 'em, your Daddy can.

"It's goin' t' be tough fer me an' you
'Fore th' war is done.
You're goin' t' be hungry an' tired an' sore.
Th' guns 'll be few an' oughta be more.
But don't fergit I'm with you, son,
A-sweatin' blood till th' war is done.
I'm kinda old, but I'm still a man,
If you can't lick 'em, your Daddy can.

"I'm sorta crippled an' not ez young
Ez I used t' be.
But a derned good fight is in me still,
If you need th' 'Old man,' jest holler, Bill.
We'll send th' guns, an' all th' rest,
You stay on th' job, an' do your best.
Don't grumble er cuss—jest be a man.
If you can't lick 'em, your Daddy can.

"We've allus been pardners, since you wuz small,
Jest me an' you.
Seemed like a knife stuck in my heart
When you jined th' army, t' do your part;
I'll work over here—you fight over there,
An' father an' son are a pretty good pair.
An' allus remember, you've got an 'Old Man,'
If you can't lick 'em, your Daddy can."

BILL'S UNCLE

Bill sent a letter th' other day
From over in France.
An' started it off: "Dear Uncle Sam,
You told me t' go an' here I am.
Been learnin' a lot 'bout how t' fight,
An' pluggin' away with all my might.
I'm kinda tired uv settin' still;
I'm ready t' fight—let's go," sez Bill.

"You sure been a good ole Uncle t' me
Since I wuz small.
There's never been much you asked me t' do.
You're needin' me bad an' I'll see you through.
An' Tommie an' Jean an' Pat an' Jock,
Are holdin' th' Huns like a granite rock.
They're cousins uv mine an' had their fill,
I'm ready t' help—let's go," sez Bill.

"Th' war will be won by th' man at
home,
An' we know it well.
Let politics go an' th' personal
grudge,
Pick th' best men—th' people can
judge.
Give 'em th' jobs that you know are
hard;
Th' little man's due fer th' big discard.
There's a terrible lot uv red tape still,
Cut it all loose—let's go," sez Bill.

"It's a good big job we've got on
hand,
Jest me an' you.
Let's stick together—we're boun' t'
win.
You back me up an' I'll never give in.
I'm leavin' th' folks at home t' you;
Look after them till th' war is
through.
I love you, Uncle, an' allus will.
I'll do MY part. Your nephew, Bill."

A PRAYER FOR BILL

I ain't been much on prayin', God,
Er goin' t' church,
I've tried t' do what I thought wuz
right,
A-helpin' my friends an' treatin' 'em
white.
I'm kinda sharp on a business deal,
I haven't lied an' I wouldn't steal.
An' so I'm askin' you, God, to-night:
Watch over Bill when we start t' fight.

I know you've a lot uv work t' do
Way over there.
A-watchin' th' Hun at his hellish play,
An' countin' th' souls ez they fly away.
Bill's only a boy, but he had t' go,
With Mother an' me a-lovin' him so.
An' so we pray, dear God, to-night:
Watch over Bill when we start t' fight.

We're lonely, God, an' want our boy,
Across th' sea.
All we can do is wait an' pray;
It's hard t' bear with him away,
Oh! keep him clean an' brave an' true;
He's fightin' fer Mother an' me an'
You.
So hear me, God, ez I pray to-night:
Watch over Bill when we start t' fight.

We know it will end somehow, some
day,
Ez all things do.
Th' dead will sleep in th' Madman's
track,
An' only th' strong come marchin'
back.
We'll count it lost if th' fight is won,
Th' price uv success—our only son.
An' so I pray, dear God, to-night:
Watch over Bill when we start t' fight.

ALL TOGETHER

Over in France, in th' dirt an' mud,
There's a boy uv ours;
He said he'd fight till th' war wuz through,
An' leave th' rest t' me an' you.
We promised t' help in every way;
If we couldn't fight we said we'd pay.
It's up t' us, we can if we will;
Let's stop our fussin' an' pull fer Bill.

What does it matter, when all is done,
T' you an' me,
T' keep our money, but lose th' fight,
An' bend our necks t' th' German's might?
Let's learn t' save an' go without;
Our money is talkin'—let's make it shout.
It's up t' us, we can if we will;
Let's pull together an' pull fer Bill.

It's easy t' stand a wheatless day,
If it's helpin' Bill.
We'd rather be cold than have it said
We used th' coal when he needed bread.
It isn't much, an' it's rather small
T' give so little when he gives all.
It's up t' us, we can if we will;
Let's stand together an' stand by Bill.

How would you like t' take his place
Out on th' front?
How would you like t' be young an' strong,
A-doin' your part t' right th' wrong?
Your part's at home—it's hard, I know,
T' stand aside, when th' others go.
It's up t' us, we can if we will;
We'll pull together—we're all fer Bill.

HELPING BILL

A great big drive is comin' soon,
So th' fellers say,
An' Bill an' th' rest will have a chance
T' show th' reason they went t' France.
Th' job is big an' th' men are few,
But a huskier crowd you never knew.
They've never been licked an' never will.
I wish I wuz there a-helpin' Bill!

Think uv 'em standin' there all alone,
Them boys uv ours,
Holdin' their ground when th' Huns attack,
A-stoppin' 'em quick an' drivin' 'em back.
An' now an' then, in th' seethin' hell,
You'll hear a good old rebel yell,
Hear it a-risin', loud an' shrill.
I wish I wuz there a-helpin' Bill!

It's a little bit more'n a man can bear,
A-waitin' fer news.
I hardly can think uv that boy uv mine
A-takin' his stand on th' battle-line,
Blackened with powder an' daubed with mud,
Pale an' haggard an' red with blood,
He said he would fight an' I know he will;
I wish I wuz there a-helpin' Bill!

They say we're too old t' go an' fight,
Both me an' you.
We're needed at home t' work an' pay
An' tend t' business every day.
I'd give the rest uv this life uv mine
T' be with my boy on th' battle line,
A-backin' him up, ez I allus will;
A-fightin' an' helpin' along with Bill.

SEWING FOR BILL

When th' President said he wanted men
Able t' fight,
Bill promised t' see th' ole war through,
An' do th' fightin' fer me an' you.
We stay at home an' sleep in a bed,
While Bill lies down with th' dyin' an' dead.
So git out an' push, till we're "over the hill,"
Be one of th' workers—an' sew fer Bill.

They're cryin' fer all you can sew er knit,
Out on th' front.
Th' raw red wounds need rolls uv gauze,
Fer a life is lost by a moment's pause.
Bill's willin' t' fight—it's th' part uv a man—
You do YOUR part, ez good ez you can.
So git out an' push, till we're "over the hill,"
Give up your pleasures—an' sew fer Bill.

Think uv him wounded an' all alone,
Way over there.
Think how he welcomes that glorious sight—
Crosses uv red on th' fields uv white.
It's little enough he asks us t' do,
But what there is left is "up t' you."
So git out an' push, till we're "over the hill,"
"Stick t' your knittin'," and sew fer Bill.

A STAR FOR BILL

There's an empty place with an empty chair
In this house uv mine.
We lost a boy but they gained a man
Who'll do his part ez good ez he can.
We're lonely an' sad, his mother an' me—
They needed men an' it had t' be.
But while he's gone there's hangin' still
Our Service Flag an' it stands fer Bill.

It wasn't bought but sewed with care
By a mother's hands.
Stitch by stitch an' seam by seam,
With chokin' sobs an' a prayer between.
Lovin' an' tender th' hands that made
Th' flag that means that a debt is paid.
A poor little flag that makes me thrill,
All red an' white with a star fer Bill.

A STAR FOR BILL

Dear is our flag, with it's stars an' stripes,
Ez it waves on high.
Th' flag that is close t' my heart t'day
Is th' flag uv th' boy that is far away.
An' th' little star in th' field uv white
Tells uv a boy that has gone t' fight.
Our flag is dear, but dearer still
That little blue star that stands fer Bill.

OTHER WAR VERSES

OVER THE TOP

A bookkeeper sat on an office stool,
With ink eraser and pen and rule,
He added 'em up, all clear 'an neat,
An' brought 'em down on the balance sheet.
The credits in black an' the debits in red,
But always this song ran through his head:
"I want to go out with the Army,
And learn to take a chance;
I want to be, before I'm done,
A roarin', fightin' son-of-a-gun.
I want to "hike" and carry a pack,
And I don't care if I never come back.
I want to go over to France!"

A statement of this and an invoice made,
"Discount allowed" and "freight pre-paid,"
"Shipment delayed" and "please remit,"
All these and more made up his "bit."
But over and over, throughout the day,
If you listened close, you'd hear him say:
"I want to go out with the Army,
And wear those bulgin' pants.
I want to be, before I'm done,
A roarin', fightin' son-of-a-gun.
I want to follow wherever I'm led,
I want to know if my blood runs red.
I want to go over to France!"

THE "U" BOAT

Deep in the sea, in the mire and ooze,
  Shunning the sight of man,
It broods alone, like a loathsome beast,
Licking its jaws from its bloody feast,
  Under humanity's ban.

Bestial, slimy, and gruesome,
  Foul from its hellish meal,
Waiting alone for another day
To gorge itself on its helpless prey,
  Ruthless and cold as steel.

Ravenous, vile, abhorrent,
  A ghoul by its master's will,
It slavers and mouths the soft white flesh
Of mother and babe, as they bleed afresh,
  With jaws that are never still.

FOR FRANCE

(A French outpost had been subjected to a heavy fire all day and the dead and dying lay in great heaps together. When the German line leaped out of the trenches and attempted to occupy the French position, a dying sergeant sprang to his feet with the cry, "Arise, ye dead!" Animated by a common spirit, the dying men made one last effort and hurled the Germans back with heavy loss.—*War Correspondent's Report.*)

The fight had been long and bitter,
And shrapnel and bursting shell
Had made of the trench a shambles
More awful than tongue can tell.

The wounded crowded the dying,
The dead men lay as they fell;
The deep-trod mud was red with blood,
Like an anteroom loaned by hell.

Out of the smoke came the Germans,
  True sons of the Terrible Hun;
Counting the battle ended,
  Thinking the fight was won.

Up sprang a boyish sergeant,
  Raising his flag on high;
"Come, drive them back, my comrades—
  We haven't the time to die!"

And up from the bloody trenches
The wounded and dying rose,
And hurled what was left of their bodies,
Full hard in the face of their foes.

To France is the fame and the glory,
Dear God, of that wonderful sight;
When men that were almost in heaven,
Arose from the dead to fight!

VENGEANCE

". . . and with what measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."—Luke 6:38.

Daily by cot and pallet, the idle soldiers stand,
Hearing the tales of horror, told by the broken band.
Daily they stand and listen, marking the sightless eyes
Of these who sit in darkness, beneath the sun-lit skies.

Always the cry of vengeance, as beggars seeking a dole,
The cry of the broken body calling to him that's whole.
And ever the cry is louder, from out the ravished lands,
Of those that sit in darkness, with idle, groping hands.

Daily they gather closer, touching
them now and then,
The scars that once were faces, the
bodies that once were men;
Deep grows the pity, deeper, searing
the very soul,
For those that sit in darkness, and
nevermore are whole.

This is the promise given to those that
fight no more,
Binding and true the promise, swear-
ing it o'er and o'er:
"Full measure and overflowing, we'll
mete it out again
To beasts that hide their natures un-
der the guise of men."

THEY SHALL NOT PASS

"To every man upon this earth,
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the Temples of his Gods?"

Macaulay's Horatius.

Behind them lies the homeland,
A-gleaming in the sun,
In front the blackened landscape,
Tells of the ruthless Hun.

Behind them lies the honor
Of daughters and of wives;
In front they rape and ravish,
Where brave men gave their lives.

Behind them lies the passage
  Straight to the heart of France;
In front the hordes of vandals
  Fight ever to advance.

And by their hope in heaven,
  By flower and tree and grass;
By earth and sky and water,
  They swear, "They shall not pass!"

"And while the earth is fertile,
And sunshine follows rain,
As long as sparks fly upward,
The Boche shall strive in vain."

And souls that dwell in free-men
Shall wing their way on high,
And spread the word in heaven
That freedom shall not die.

THE BARBARIAN

Thou impious one that dares to claim
God's sanction for thy deeds of shame!
Dost think a God, whose only Son
Took to his heart each little one,
Saying, as they gathered around his knee,
"Suffer the children to come unto Me";
Dost think this God will close his eyes
To handless arms, nor hear the cries
Of innocent babes, by thy commands
Maimed and helpless throughout the lands?
How dost thou dare, whose acts are known,
To name Our Lord upon His Throne,

And call on Him to be thy guide
With crimes like these on every side?
Thou foolish one, God is not mocked
By empty words, in floods unlocked.
Nor canst thou blind eternal sight
By deeds of horror done at night.
When God requires thy soul of thee,
And from thy crimes the world is free,
Then shalt thou know His judgment clear,
And cringe and moan in craven fear.
Then shalt thou know, thou senseless clod,
How strong the justice of our God!

THE COMFORTER

In No Man's Land, where the dead men lie,
Where the shrapnel bursts and the bullets fly,
A boy lay shattered and all alone,
Gritting his teeth to choke a groan.

Friends he had but he had to die,
Broken and bleeding and wondering why
No comrade came to grip his hand
And wish him luck in the other land.

He never had planned to die like this,
Out in the grass where the bullets hiss,
Untended, helpless and foul with mud,
Watching the flow of his living blood.

His eyes grew dim and he tried to
pray,
And the God of His Fathers, far away,
Gazed in pity and sent a friend
To guard him close to the bitter end.

* * * * * *

Out in the grass a face looked up,
The shaggy face of an Airedale pup.
Homely he was, but his deep brown
eyes
Lighted with love and a glad surprise.

One could crawl and the other smile;
Both were dying, but after a while
A dog and a boy lay side by side,
Happy together—and so they died.

WE'LL NEVER GIVE IN

Marching Song

We've packed our "kits" and crossed the sea,
Where life is cheap and bullets are free.
We've plenty of guns and enough to eat;
We're husky and strong and hard to beat.

Tell them back home,
We'll never give in;
Let them all know,
We'll never give in;
We're in the fight and we're in to win;
So carry this message, "We'll never give in!"

We're up to our necks in dirt and mud,
Splashing around in rivers of blood;
We've fought all night—we'll fight all
day,
And the Germans know there's hell to
pay.

Tell them back home,
We'll never give in;
Let them all know,
We'll never give in;
We're in the fight and we're in to win;
So carry this message, "We'll never
give in!"

The hunting is good, there's many a
Hun,
We shoot them sitting or on the run;
They always scatter and run away
From the guns and boys of the U. S. A.

Tell them back home,
We'll never give in;
Let them all know,
We'll never give in;
We're in the fight and we're in to win;
So carry this message, "We'll never
give in!"

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